

News from Rep. Stephanie Herseth

For Immediate Release

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HOUSE DEMOCRATS EMBRACE BIOFUELS AS PART OF NATIONAL ENERGY STRATEGY

Herseth a Leader in Unprecedented Commitment to Achieve Energy Independence in Ten Years

November 17, 2005, Washington, D.C. - This week, Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi unveiled the Democratic Caucus' "Innovation for the 21st Century Agenda," which includes an unprecedented commitment to biofuels as a core part of our national energy strategy. A principal goal of the agenda is to achieve energy independence from the Middle East within ten years by rapidly expanding the production and distribution of domestic ethanol, biodiesel and other biofuels. Never before has either party expressed such a strong and clear endorsement of the benefits of renewable biofuels to our nation's energy strategy.

In her role as co-chair of the House Rural Working Group, Rep. Stephanie Herseth has been working to convince colleagues in the House that we should be spending America's energy dollars in the Midwest rather than the Middle East.

Herseth praised the decision to move biofuels to the center of our energy strategy, and said, "This move marks a significant shift in the debate, from whether we should expand the use the biofuels, to a debate about what investments need to be made to achieve energy independence based on homegrown biofuels. The goal is to achieve total dependence from foreign oil in ten years by encouraging investmens in biofuels."

Leader Pelosi commented, "Representative Herseth has been an articulate advocate for ethanol and biodiesel since she came to the Congress, and she has worked hard to solve our nation's energy crisis. As co-chair of the Rural Working Group, she has been a leader and an advocate for rural issues within our caucus and the entire Congress. I look forward to continuing to work with her to emphasize ethanol and biofuels as crucial to a strategy for energy independence."

Herseth noted that leaders including Tom Daschle and Tim Johnson have long been arguing that biofuels should be the core of our nation's energy policy. She added, "Because of that work, we've come a long way in expanding the use of ethanol and biodiesel, but much has needed to happen in the world of priorities and policy in Washington to get to the next level."

The Democratic Caucus' Innovation Agenda states: "America will achieve energy independence from Middle East oil in the next 10 years by developing emerging technologies that work in synergy with the existing energy infrastructure. A sustained investment in research and development is crucial to creating cutting-edge technologies that allow us to develop clean, sustainable energy alternatives and capitalize on America's vast renewable natural resources. To achieve this goal, Democrats will:

Substantially reduce the use of petroleum based fuels by rapidly expanding production and distribution of synthetic and bio-based fuels, such as ethanol derived from cellulosic sources, and by deploying new engine technologies for fuel-flexible, hybrid, plug-in hybrid and biodiesel vehicles.

Create a new DARPA-like initiative within the Department of Energy to provide seed money for fundamental research needed to develop high-risk, high-reward technologies and build markets for the next generation of revolutionary energy technologies, such as those emerging from biotechnology, nanotechnology, solar, and fuel-cell research."

Earlier this year, Representative Herseth brought Republican House Agriculture Chairman Bob Goodlatte to South Dakota to visit an ethanol plant in Wentworth. Goodlatte worked with Herseth to help build momentum for a strong Renewable Fuels Standard in the Energy Bill. His support marked the first time he has taken an active role in promoting biofuels. Prior to that, Herseth led an hour of discussion on the House floor to dispel myths and outline the benefits of renewable fuels like ethanol.

Herseth noted the need to develop a strong, bipartisan coalition for biofuels in the Congress. "We've always enjoyed solid support in farm country for ethanol, but to have the support of Members of Congress from more urban areas can really help us turn the corner. This is a big win for ethanol and a big win for South Dakota," she added.

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Congresswoman Stephanie Herseth serves South Dakota in the U.S. House of Representatives. She is a member of the Blue Dog Coalition, a group of moderate Democrats committed to fiscal discipline and strong national security, and is co-chair of the Rural Working Group, which is dedicated to raising the profile of issues important to rural America. She also serves on three committees vital to South Dakota's interests: Agriculture, Veterans' Affairs and Resources.